

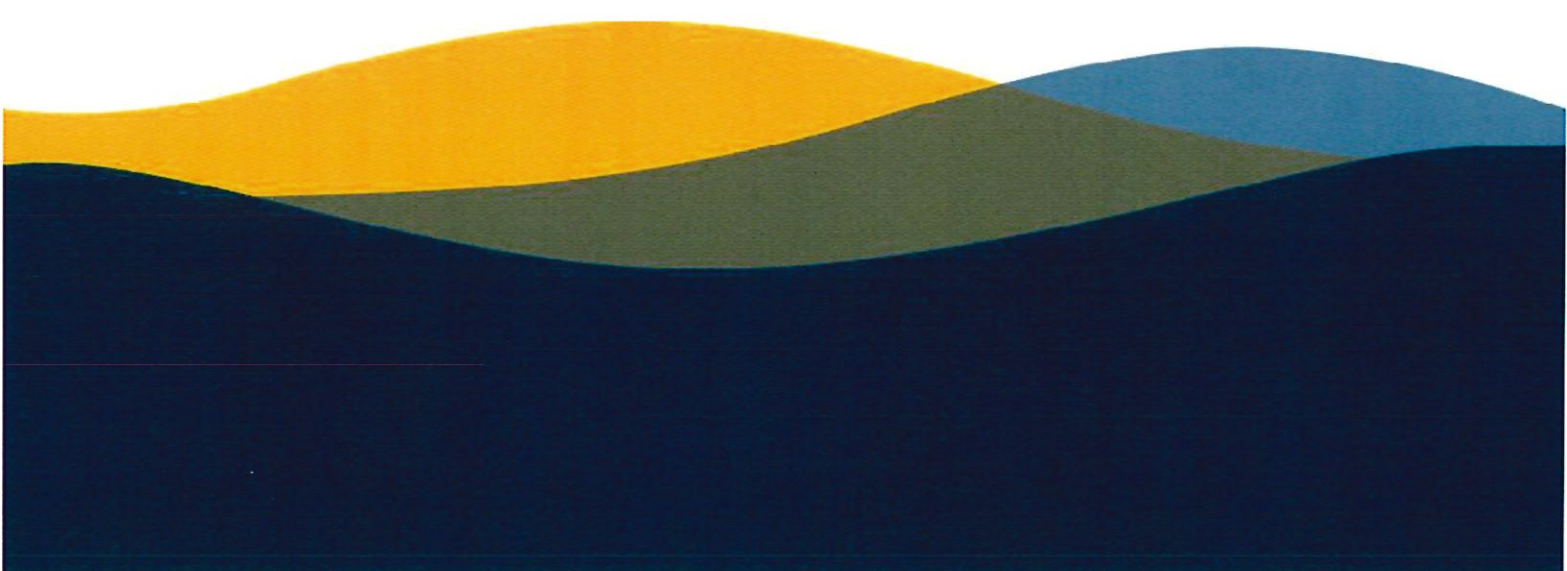
Vocational & Life Skills

Quarterly Report – Grant Cycle Six, Quarter Four
April - June 2026

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Vocational and Life Skills Quarterly Report

GRANT CYCLE SIX, QUARTER FOUR

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Executive Summary

The Vocational and Life Skills (VLS) Program was created through Nebraska Legislative Bill 907 in 2014 to support individuals returning to the community after incarceration. The program funds organizations across Nebraska that provide services such as job training, education, mentoring, housing support, and life skills development to help individuals successfully transition back into their communities. The program is administered by the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services and evaluated by the Nebraska Center for Justice Research (NCJR). Questions on this report may be directed to senior research specialist, Dr. Katelynn Towne, at the Nebraska Center for Justice Research (ktowne@unomaha.edu).

This report provides information on:

- The organizations funded through the VLS program
- The number of individuals served during the quarter
- Program participation and completions
- The average cost to serve participants across programs
- How grant funding has been distributed and used

Program data is reported by service providers through the Nebraska Inmate Case Management System (NICaMS). Because this system is continuously updated, some numbers may change slightly as new information is entered or corrected.

Overall, this report provides a snapshot of how VLS funding is supporting services that help individuals build employment skills, access community resources, and work toward successful reentry. More information about the program offerings can be located in the [NDCS Opportunities for Change Catalog](#) that is updated annually. Additionally, updates on VLS programs and announcements can be found on the [NDCS Reentry Services page](#).

Report Definitions

Participants Served

This term refers to the number of unique individuals served through various VLS programs. A program participant is an individual who engaged with a program during the specified reporting period. Each person is counted once, regardless of how many times they participated in program activities.

Cost Per Participant

This metric represents the amount of VLS investment used to support each participant within a specific program. Programs may also have additional funding sources that contribute to participant support. Cost per participant is calculated by dividing the total reimbursements paid to the program to date by the total number of individuals served by that program during the reporting quarter.

Program Offering Participations

This term refers to the total number of engagements or interactions participants had with VLS programs. Unlike “Participants Served,” which counts unique individuals, this measure counts each instance of participation. As a result, the same individual may be counted multiple times if they take part in multiple program offerings.

Provider Descriptions

Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC)

ABC is part of a national company that provides trade-specific apprenticeship training and work-based learning opportunities for careers in the construction industry. ABC offers classes in correctional facilities and ABC facilities in Lincoln and Omaha.

Different Approach

Different Approach Sober Living's aim is to provide a safe, supportive, and structured environment where individuals in recovery can rebuild their lives. Different Approach offers tailored approaches to recovery and empowers residents to develop life skills needed to transition into substance-free living.

Mental Health Association (MHA)

MHA provides peer-run behavioral and "wrap-around" support services in Lincoln and Omaha. This holistic approach provides participants with access to services on an as-needed basis. Services include evidence-based programming and peer-group activities that are provided in residential and facility settings.

Metropolitan Community College (MCC)

MCC is a public education institution that supports the 180 Re-entry Assistance Program (180-RAP) to provide education and work readiness training both within prison and on the Omaha campus. MCC provides college courses, workshops, employment consultations, and a food pantry for those in need.

O.NE. Mentoring Academy

O.NE. Mentoring Academy (O.M.A.) focuses on the mind, body, and soul, emphasizing a holistic approach to the self and the complexities of humanity. Its anger management program offers participants an eight-week course, meeting for 1.5 hours each week in small groups of six to ten participants, with the objective of fostering cognitive and behavioral change through anger management philosophy and techniques. The organization's cornerstone is its commitment to addressing issues of self-worth, stress, depression, and anxiety by utilizing psychotherapeutic methods and effective coping strategies.

Opening Doors

Opening Doors is a reentry program at the Center for People in Lincoln. Opening Doors offers career pathway courses, job search services, 1:1 coaching, 5 Keys classes, and volunteer opportunities for positive social engagement. Participants also receive career readiness training—including resume writing, cover letters, and mock interview support—while building cognitive, relational, and technical skills for successful reentry.

ReConnect, Inc.

ReConnect offers facility- and community-based programming that incorporates promising and best practices to support prosocial skill development for individuals who are incarcerated or living in the community. Community-based services include individual case management and support to address housing, employment, basic needs, and other factors impacting self-sufficiency and reentry success. Services are also available in Spanish.

RISE

RISE seeks to end cycles of incarceration by equipping currently and formerly incarcerated people with job readiness, reentry planning, and housing and employment pathways that help participants thrive in their communities.

The Work Lab

The Work Lab is a nonprofit organization that partners with local employers to support justice-involved individuals in sustaining long-term employment. The organization focuses on addressing practical and behavioral needs that may create challenges in the workplace, helping employees remain stable in their positions while strengthening the companies that hire them. Through individualized support and collaboration with businesses, The Work Lab works to improve retention and promote successful workforce reintegration.

Western Alternative Corrections, Inc. at Bristol Station

Bristol Station assists formerly incarcerated persons in transitioning into the community in a residential setting located in Hastings, NE. Participants have access to opportunities of self-discovery and are encouraged to develop sustainable pro-social routines.

Ybor – A Second Chance Kitchen

Ybor is a culinary reentry program that creates pathways to employment and advancement in the restaurant industry. Through partnerships with Southeast Community College and local restaurants, participants progress through a structured culinary pipeline: food safety certification, culinary fundamentals class, a pre-apprenticeship at Ybor's events, and ultimately full-time employment in a Lincoln restaurant while joining a registered apprenticeship through the U.S. Department of Labor. Ybor's mission is to deliver more than just job training—it's a pathway to careers, community, and confidence. Each phase of the program uses the dignity of work and the structure of a professional kitchen to help participants build pride, professionalism, and a sustainable future.

Participants Served

During quarter 4 of grant cycle 6, VLS funded programs served a total of **1,463 unique individuals**, **1,430 of whom successfully completed programming** across all reporting organizations. **A total of 502 individuals were currently enrolled** from the quarter across participating organizations when this report was drafted.

Program ¹	Currently Enrolled (Q4) ²	Successful Completions (Q4) ³	Total Participants (Q4) ⁴
Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC)	27	6	11
Different Approach	- ⁵	17	24
Mental Health Association (MHA)	142	280	284
Metropolitan Community College (MCC)	184	689	690
O.NE Mentoring Academy	1	10	12
Opening Doors	1	92	98
ReConnect, Inc.	3	257	274
RISE	153	255	259
The Work Lab	2	-	-
Western Alternative Corrections (WAC)	-	12	12
Ybor	11	88	89

¹ Participant data are unique to each program and participants may be active in multiple programs.

² A summation of individuals who are still progressing in VLS funded programming from the quarter.

³ A summation of individuals who successfully completed VLS funded programming during the quarter.

⁴ A summation of individuals who completed VLS funded programming during the quarter.

⁵ The “-” notes data that is not yet available to the evaluation team on the NICaMS system.

Cost Per Participant

Program	Total Funds Awarded (GC6)	Total Participants (GC6) ⁶	Total Reimbursements at Q4 (GC6)	Average Cost Per Individual (GC6) ⁷
Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC)	\$740,000.00	119	\$23,808.15	\$3,109.24
Different Approach	\$197,100.00	123	\$59,937.50	\$1,088.21
Mental Health Association (MHA)	\$1,250,000.00	989	\$180,505.22	\$626.53
Metropolitan Community College (MCC) ⁸	\$1,564,600.00	1,572	\$101,001.59	\$386.19
O.NE Mentoring Academy	\$61,706.46	12	\$4,495.50	\$481.75
Opening Doors	\$972,752.00	327	\$206,169.65	\$1,303.68
ReConnect, Inc.	\$600,000.00	836	\$57,833.36	\$338.32
RISE	\$500,000.00	358	\$38,666.14	\$698.07
The Work Lab	\$30,000.00	0	\$1,661.67	-
Western Alternative Corrections (WAC)	\$730,000.00	52	\$10,300.00	\$6,340.38
Ybor	\$353,841.54	299	\$140,489.17	\$913.64
Total	\$7,000,000.00	3,291⁹	\$824,867.95	\$1,003.85

⁶ A summation of unique individuals who participated in VLS funded programming since the grant cycle started.

⁷ Grant cycle reimbursement costs divided by the summation of unique individuals who participated in programming excluding active enrollments.

⁸ MCC has not submitted reimbursements for the month of June at the time this report was drafted.

⁹ This number is a summation of unique individuals across the programs. Some individuals participate in multiple programs, and this number excludes duplication to provide a total of unique individuals represented across VLS.

Program Offering Participations

VLS *Program offerings* were developed for each grantee, so the evaluation may describe programming components. Each grantee provides different services; thus, each has a unique catalogue of offerings. Some participants may only need one offering while others may receive multiple. The program offering status describes how participants are or have participated in programming. The variety in program offerings has changed over the years and will continue to change to meet the needs of the population. Therefore, some of the data presented will not match exactly with previous quarterly reports on program offerings.

Program offering participations for grant cycle six, quarter four (April 2026 – June 2026) are presented below. Program staff work with each participant to develop an individualized plan of programming unique to their needs. Many participants are involved in multiple program offerings at each program, and some offerings available are not suitable for each participant. Some may only complete one program offering, while others may participate in multiple offerings either back-to-back or simultaneously.

Associated Builders and Contractors Participations

There are **33** active participations in Associated Builders and Contractor's (ABC) program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Core	2	0	0	2
Electrical 1	2	0	2	4
Electrical 2	1	0	0	1
Electrical 4	1	0	0	1
Plumbing 1	0	0	3	3
Total	6	0	5	11

Different Approach Participations

There are no active participations in Different Approach's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Case Management and Goal Setting	12	8	0	20
Employment and Education Support	1	0	0	1
Life Skills Development	16	7	0	23
Orientation to Services	1	0	0	1
Peer Support and Mentorship	8	5	0	13
Recovery Support Services	7	5	0	12
Sober Housing Assistance	12	8	0	20
Total	57	33	0	90

Mental Health Association Participations

There are **152** active participations in Mental Health Association's (MHA) program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
CARES	61	0	0	61
Green House	0	2	1	3
HONU	13	4	0	17
Hope	102	0	0	102
Peer Prevention Group	132	0	0	132
Terrapin	6	2	1	9
Total	314	8	2	324

Metropolitan Community College Participations

There are **187** active participations in Metropolitan Community College's (MCC) program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
CDL Preparation	10	0	0	10
Employment Readiness	48	0	0	48
Forklift Certification	71	0	0	71
Long-Term Relief Group	73	0	0	73
MCC Certificate of Completion-Noncredit	1	0	0	1
MCC Credit Course	178	0	5	183
National Career Readiness Certificate	31	0	0	31
Non-Credit Workshop	148	0	0	148
Orientation	472	0	0	472
Trauma Informed Peer Support	273	0	0	273
Total	1,305	0	5	1,310

O.NE Mentoring Academy Participations

There is 1 active participation in O.NE Mentoring Academy's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Anger Management	10	0	2	12
Total	10	0	2	12

Opening Doors Participations

There is 1 active participation in Opening Door's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Career Connection	35	0	3	38
Computer/Administrative Skills	67	1	1	69
Reentry Reality	17	0	2	19
Warehouse/Manufacturing Logistics	18	0	0	18
Total	137	1	6	144

ReConnect, Inc. Participations

There are **3** active participations in ReConnect's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Career Prep	0	0	1	1
Final Number	41	0	0	41
GPS (self-paced)	9	0	0	9
KEYS 1	34	0	4	38
KEYS 2	31	0	2	33
Post-Release Reentry Support	71	0	0	71
Ready for Work	150	0	0	150
Right Start 2.0	43	0	0	43
Success Prep	59	0	11	70
Success Prep-Bloom	4	0	1	5
Total	442	0	19	461

RISE Participations

There are **153** active participations in RISE's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Crisis Intervention	4	0	0	4
Emotional Support	1,012	0	0	1,012
Employment Assistance	40	0	0	40
Financial Assistance	41	0	0	41
Housing Assistance	10	0	0	10
Parole/Probation/Supervised Release Support	28	0	0	28
Reentry Planning	127	0	0	127
Reentry Services and Support	17	0	5	22
Transportation Assistance	54	0	0	54
Total	1,333	0	5	1,338

The Work Lab Participations

There are **2** active participations in the Work Lab's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions for this program are not available at this time.

Western Alternative Corrections Participations

There are no active participations in Western Alternative Corrections' (WAC) program offerings from this quarter. The WAC discontinued their VLS sponsored programs on April 10, 2026. Quarter completions through quarter four of grant cycle six are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Conflict Resolution	12	0	0	12
Dress for Success	9	0	0	9
Employment Retention	8	0	0	8
Interviewing Skills	12	0	0	12
Money Management	1	0	0	1
Relapse Prevention Group	3	0	0	3
Residential Case Management	12	0	0	12
Residential Reentry	12	0	0	12
Responsible Thinking	5	0	0	5
Victim Awareness	1	0	0	1
Total	75	0	0	75

Ybor Participations

There are **13** active participations in Ybor's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Apprenticeship	0	0	1	1
Food Handlers Permit Classes	76	0	0	76
Intro to Culinary Fundamentals Class at SCC	10	0	0	10
Pre-Apprenticeship	2	0	0	2
Total	88	0	1	89